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good, even with ice cream

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Very Big Furniture

Anca Szilágyi

In 1968 we inherited very big furniture. American Chippendale – hefty things that barely fit through the door. We had to grease the thresholds with a bit of oil when they arrived. The doorway to our apartment was nicked a couple of times, and the furniture was damaged a bit, but Mother sat down with wood polish and made them like new. They sit dark and low in our sitting room: one sofa, two armchairs, and an armoire. Upholstered with deep red leather.

Mother was very proud of the furniture. Cousin Michael's success brought to our very own home. She made me get all dressed up in ruffled holiday clothes, and sit on the sofa. It felt enormous, with my feet sticking out just past the edge. She and Father sat in the armchairs looking at me, then at each other, swinging their dangling legs. Father took out his violin and played the national anthem. Then he began a folk song before Mother shot him a look, told him to pass the violin around. I played what I knew at the time, and then Mother played. Later she had her friend with the camera come by and take our portrait, the three of us with dangling legs off the couch, me on the edge in the middle.

She and Cousin Michael hadn't seen each other in years, and now that he was old and dying, he wanted to make sure the family received the fruits of his labor. He packed his furniture into large wooden crates, and sent them half way around the world. The news of his death arrived before the furniture.

"He had lived long enough," said Mother, folding the letter back into the airmail envelope. Cousin Michael was ninety-three.

Soon after, Mother got sick. Doctor said it was the air in the apartment, damp and ridden with mold. He suggested we take a holiday on the Black Sea, and consider moving. Mother was all for the holiday. We locked up the apartment and got onto Father's motorcycle: they on the bike, I in the sidecar. A glorious long weekend on the beach. Mother stretched and took deep salty breaths and said, "I feel better already," shaking her dark hair down.

Our last day there, a carnival arrived. On the boardwalk, Mother danced with a bald, powder-white clown in pink polka dots. The clown chased her with a cream pie down the beach, enormous shoes flopping in the sand, until she turned the chase on him and pushed him into the ocean. The clown sat in the water, seaweed atop his head, makeup running. Father's face softened and he chuckled. We all danced to the motorcycle, laughing. On the way home, I watched Mother sleep against Father's back. Halfway back to Bucharest, the motorcycle died. We pushed it uphill and rode it downhill until a man with an old Carpati gave us a lift.

At home, no one discussed moving. The sea air still tingled in our noses, the taste of fried dough battered in sugar on our tongues. Mother cut her hair short and let it gray. "With dignity," she said. She and Father were older than my friends' parents. More accomplished, they had said, without blinking an eye. Father had been the conductor of the Timisoara Philharmonic a long time ago. He was also a lawyer and spoke several languages. His hair was already white. Mother was about to attend art school around the time that father could not lead the orchestra anymore. After I was born she began teaching and only drew occasionally.

It was not long before Mother got sick again. Doctor reiterated his point about the apartment, making gestures in the air indicating the bad atmosphere, and Father listened, chin in hand. Mother took his hand and said it might be difficult with Cousin Michael's furniture. Father nodded.

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"We'll find a way," he said.

Every time Mother got sick, we made an effort to go to the sea. My parents discussed moving.

"Our furniture is too big," said Mother one October evening. "There's just no way we can move."

"What if we left it here?" asked Father.

Mother eyed him with suspicion.

"There's just no way," she repeated.

Father began to grow irritated with Mother's stubbornness. The discussions picked up and stopped abruptly with long intervals in between, continuing where they left off months later.

"Of course there's a way," muttered Father, shaking salt onto a boiled potato. Mother looked out the window, at the large spring snowflakes.

"Don't be so sure," she said, arm draped over eyes, lying on the beach.

Mother's bouts of illness grew longer.

"We can't always run to the sea," he said one day, as we entered the sitting room from another weekend away.

"So it's about money," she said, cheek to his back, on the road to the resort.

"No," replied Father, reading a newspaper in Doctor's office. "That's not it at all."

"Then what," asked Mother.

"You are too attached to...to stuff!" he said, sweeping his arm around the sitting room, punctuated with one emphatic shake. "Things," he added.

"The Best Laundry Picture"
Noa Landes, 2004

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The Word
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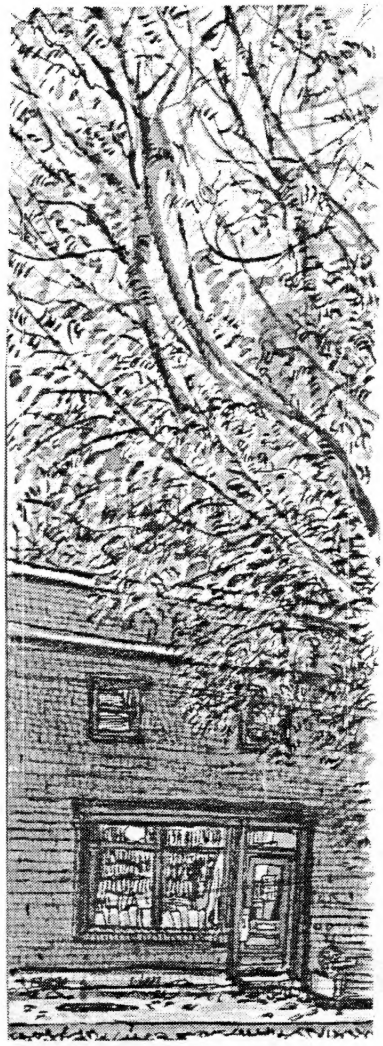

He rubbed his fingers together in a petty gesture.

"Stuff?" she said, voice thin. "Things? This," she said, patting the leather of a chair, moving along the sofa and touching it, "this is my family. What else should I do?"

"*I* am your family now," said Father. Mother, standing in the middle of the sitting room, closed her eyes.

Once, when Mother returned from a month long stay in the hospital, the first thing she did was recline on the sofa. Her body was smaller now, and paler. It looked as if the crease of the couch were sucking her in.

"Perhaps, dear," said Father, "after all this, we should move away. Give the furniture to a close friend for the time being, maybe." Father shrugged, flung up his hands. "Maybe move to Israel, someplace warm." There was an unprecedented lilt in his voice. Begging was not in his repertoire. Mother caressed the leather of the sofa, the crook of her arm resting over her eyes.

"No," she said, "I can't do that."

Father's slightly wrinkled cheeks rouged. He walked out into the hall, broke open the case to the building's emergency axe and wielded it forward into the living room.

"That's it!" he said. "I've had quite enough of this furniture." He shook the axe in Mother's general direction. The white crook of Mother's arm still shielded her eyes; she lifted her elbow slightly, and peeked through the triangle at her elderly husband.

"Now stop that," she muttered.

"I won't stop it," he gestured, the steel glinting in a rare shaft of sunlight. "I won't." He raised the axe and sunk it into the arm of a chair. Mother sat up slowly, her face tinting a faint green. She watched as he tried to lift out the axe and hack at the chair again. He did, with some difficulty, his waning muscles quivering as the chair's filling slowly spilled out, a sickly yellow foam, porous and decrepit through the jagged red leather.

"Sasha, stop," she said. He lifted up the axe, heaved it one last time into the seat of the chair, wedged in such a way that he could not lift it out. He wheezed. The axe stayed.

After he cooled off, Father turned the chair around, facing the corner. Jaundiced foam still exposed from the side, almost leering from around the back. Mother's eyes were red. Father took out his violin and played her favorite songs until she fell asleep. He lifted her body out of the couch and brought her into the bedroom.

In the dark silence she winced, and groaned, at a barely perceptible level. Father shifted the sheets, dabbed her forehead with a wet cloth. He laid his head on her chest, and listened to the slowing beat. Stayed up with Mother until the sky grayed. Doctor would not be in that day, or the next. Outside, the crows sang.

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My Deal with the Devil

Isaac Betesh

It was the time of year that all the trees are just starting to glow. Darkness had set for the last time of the year that evening, with the promise of nearly all-day sunlight for the next week. It was only a matter of an hour or so before the sun would rise for the annual "One-hundred-hour Day."

I was walking down the bromine paved streets of central city, whistling as I went and playing one of those mental games you play when there's not much else to do. At that time, a young miner came up to me and asked if I had some spare dough. "Dough" wasn't really anything specific in our colloquial speech—it basically meant anything I had on me that I had no use for and probably never would.

The usual reaction would be to hand the boy a shoelace or a leather strap you happened to have on you, or even a dime sometimes, if you were feeling real generous. I reached into my pocket and pulled out something I hadn't previously known was there. It was a pocketknife and there was no way I was giving it away, even if I had no idea how it got there. Besides, if I could possibly use it, it wasn't exactly called "dough," and dough, after all, was all he had asked for. So I returned it to my pocket for later use and told him I was sorry, but I was in almost as bad a predicament as he at the time and could afford to give him nothing.

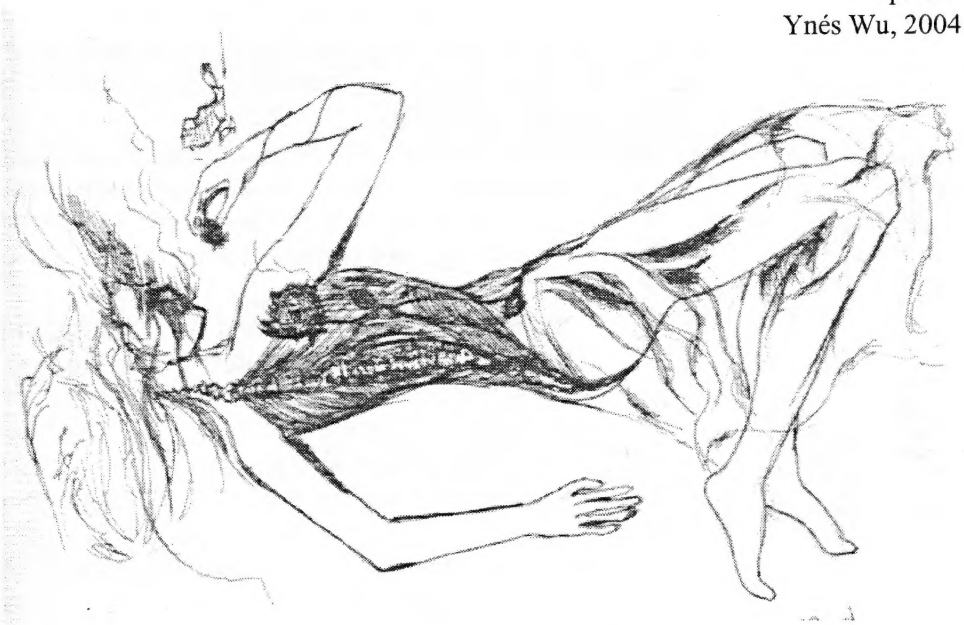
The usual reaction would be to keep walking and maybe spit a few paces later, well outside of my reach. But instead, he actually spoke to me again.

"That knife you got there could be worth somethin' to me, man. It won't ever be worth a thing to you."

And that was the wrong response from a miner boy. I slapped him over the head, which I had the right to do, as one of the educated free laborers, someone who really belonged in the town, someone who was here because the politicians knew he was smart enough to vote and deserved to live in the city and not in one of the mining camps. So I told him, politely, which surprised me, that from here on in I was determined to use that knife, that I would protect it more and consider it of more value than anything else I owned.

Given the circumstances, I wasn't too surprised with what happened to me on the way home. It wasn't exactly a glorious display of magnificence and splendor pouring down on the road in front of me, which is kind of what I was hoping for. Instead, the Devil just walked over to me, told me who he was, and offered me a deal. He didn't really prove he was the Devil and he didn't look like him either. And, like I said, he didn't make a big deal about coming down to earth. He looked more like a suburban man who had just gotten off the El-rail, come to town to do his weekly shopping. He was wearing a black robe with a hood, and I imagined, at first, traces of a brand name along the sleeve, but I guess that was just a wild fancy. I had never seen the Devil before, let alone spoken to him. His voice was vaguely familiar though, so I really had no reason to doubt him.

"Opium"
Ynés Wu, 2004



"Listen, man," he said, "I've got a good deal for you. And if you turn it down now, you'll never get the chance again."

He didn't have to ask me twice. I nearly signed the contract without even asking him what it said. But I resisted that temptation, and told him I wouldn't sign it without at least his word that it was a good deal for me with no hidden expenses, financial or otherwise.

"Look, man," he said when he finally yielded, "here's the deal: you transfer all your property to my ownership. Then, you walk out of town, down the road towards the mines. Walk about a mile. There, you'll

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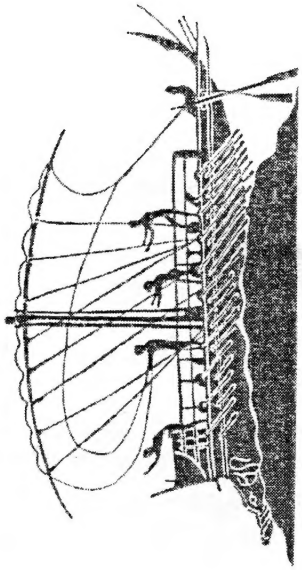

find a beautiful young maiden waiting for you. She'll lead you through a hid den entrance into a vast underground station and put you on a train bounc southward. When you get there (should be near dawn around then)—"

At this I interrupted him. "But dawn is in hardly another hour. Anc after that, the sun won't set for another few days, it being the beginning o summer now. You don't mean I'll be there that soon. I'd hardly be that fa down the road by then. But you don't mean it'll be the next dawn, do you' You wouldn't have me be on that train for a week, would you? And miss th start of summer?"

"Fool," he said, "down south, the sun sets earlier in the summer. It set later in the winter. It's that simple." The thought sounded heavily compli cated to me, and utterly ridiculous as well, but I didn't want to risk losing th deal he had offered, so I kept listening. "Anyway, man, by the time you ge there, word of your arrival will have preceded you. They'll be waiting for yo at the platform, to escort you in a chariot covered with velvet, to your new home in the underground city where I come from. There, you'll never have t work again. You can eat anything you want, whenever you want. Won't hav to worry about a thing. It'll be like the Garden of Eden. Angels to bake you bread. Angels to tailor you new clothes daily. Angels to do everything. Anc all the beautiful women you could imagine (and, between me and you, man that's by far the best part of the deal)."

"Sounds like a great deal for me," I chuckled. "Where do I sign?"

He indicated the proper place. But before I signed, I just had to haggle a drop. "When I give you everything I own, can I keep just two things?" I asked him diplomatically.

"Sure," he said, "if I approve of them. What are they?"

"The pocketknife in my pocket, and the clothes I'm wearing. Just until get to the underground city. Once I'm there, you can have even those."

"Man," he said, "I'm offering you a great deal already. How can yo bring up little things like that?" But when I persisted, he saw how important i was to me, so he continued, "Okay, man, I'll tell you what: you can keep th knife, and you can keep your shoes and briefs until you get to the station. Then you give them the shoes before you get on the train. You can keep the brief forever if you want. They're not exactly too important to me anyway."

So I pricked my finger with my pocketknife, signed my name with my own blood, and began walking down the road towards the highway, gloating over my good fortune.

I got almost a mile down the road, figuring my beautiful maiden wa just around the next corner, when I turned back. I had finally realized my mistake. If I took this deal, I would never see the sun again, and that was jus too much to part with, no matter how many angels you put in my fields or how many maidens in my chamber. So there I was, with nothing but a pocketknife And as I slept on the road that night, the thought occurred to me, during tha moment in between being fully awake and falling asleep, when the mind i open to all sorts of ridiculous suggestions, that the Devil was about the sam height and weight as the insolent boy on the road, and after all, I had neve gotten a good view of the Devil's face. But then, how would a young mine boy, who a moment ago was so desperate for even a shoelace, be able to offe me such a great deal? Though that question eased my nerves, I had answerec it by the time I had woken up the next morning. In fact, the question was itsel an answer to why he had been so insistent that I give them my shoes befor getting on the train. And since I had turned around before getting to the sta tion, he had never gotten the shoelace he had asked for after all. Between tha and the pocketknife, he had lost to me on two accounts. And I, the educatec townsman, had once again proved my intellectual superiority over the work ing class.

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The End of Suicide

Tom O'Hare

So I said this, I said *I am stuck* to this girl who couldn't care less, who was just giving me a ride home from a place I didn't want to be. She frowned vaguely in her speech, as if expecting me to announce something more optimistic and cheery, less truthful and strained. She took a right. I asked if she'd ever felt stuck, Well have you? but she didn't get it. She looked like a fig tree lathered in honey, and I've never even *seen* a real-life, honest-to-goodness fig tree. I wanted to have her. So she grimaced, not wanting this conversation, searching rather for empty pleasantries, the big game of catch in the backyard, where the game isn't on the line and it doesn't matter if you drop the ball too much, it's sort of expected, if inwardly frowned upon. So I told her the truth and wanted her to take that baseball and fucking heave it towards home in a beeline like her goddamned life depended on it. But words just fell onto the grass, dull and dead weight, and she watched them with a stupor on her honeyed-up fig tree face, trying to decide whether she wanted to play catch with that particular notion.

How could you not comprehend the blistering humanity of that statement? I seethed. How could you not *honor* it? I am fucking stuck here, and I'm drenching you in the graceless insanity of my soul, and you're going to look at me like that squirrel on the road up ahead, with the look like a deer in the headlights on his face?! How could you? And holy shit, slow down you fuck! Do you not see that squirrel on the road up ahead?!? Slow *down*, you fuc—

The girl hit the squirrel and I squirmed as the tires crushed its bones, a tingling I get even when I'm re-running over days-old roadkill. Sometimes I gag when that happens. This time I gagged. My first time in a car killing an animal on the road. I looked back and saw its carcass bloodied on the road. Finality. There is no dignity in death, I decided. Which is a fact that's been decided a million times before.

"aztecs are funny!"
Brian Henderson, 2001

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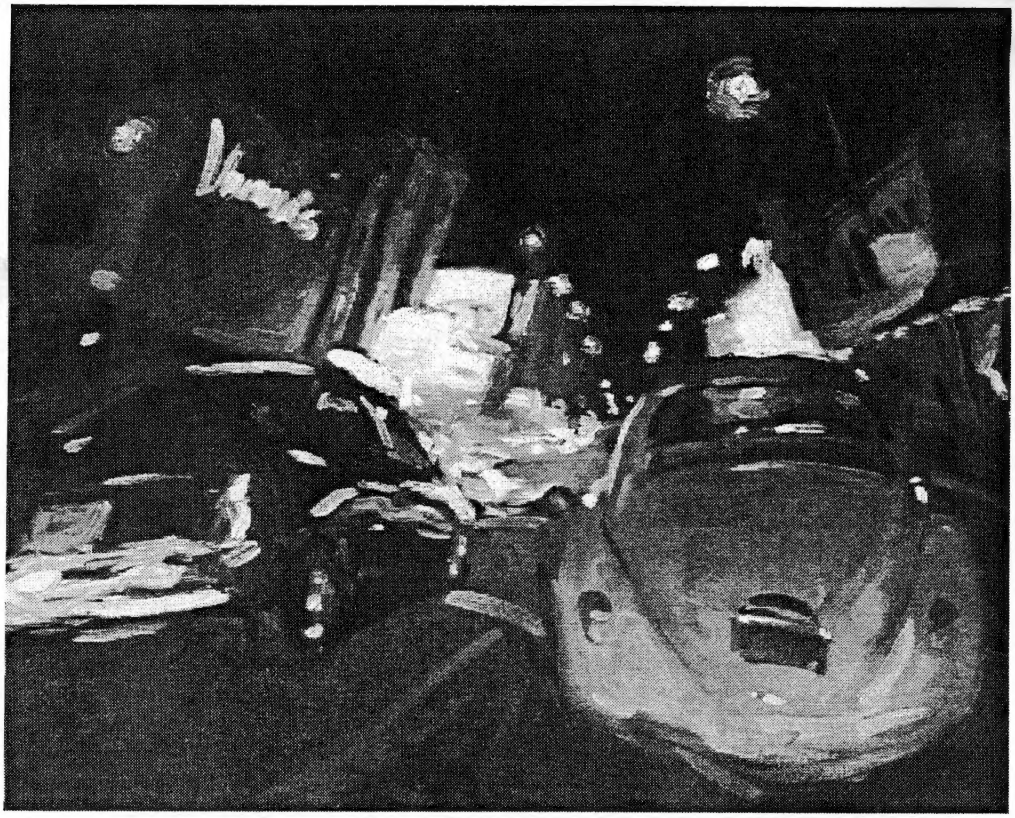
Self Portrait
Melissa Reiter

Anyway, so then she says "Well that's a terrible attitude to have now isn't it?" and then I tell her that I'm just living day by day, and who knows when I'll meet someone who'll change my perspective, and then the stupid cow thinks it might be her and starts kissing me, and good, that shuts her up for a couple hours until she can't sleep again.



james stagg

Ben Hur had Less Detail
Nathaniel G. Moore

Charles was standing naked before work, in front of the mirror and alone; there was a breeze outside though all the windows had been sealed in duct tape. His dick was small and shrivelled up into a dangling shadow. Soon it would cocoon into a larvae and fly away and he didn't give a fuck.

In a dream last night, Charles could read letters right on a picnic basket, he rode a BMX bike, there was sun on her tongue, circling her ass, in her new swimming suit she bought at the Polish discount store in her neighbourhood, a suit she described to him over the phone that he'd never see her in.

"I can't put it on for you, it would be too much, it's too much for you."

She had explained to him their differences, and he couldn't argue, it was impossible, she made it sound like a regulation from a set of board game instructions. Charles knew their physical proximity wouldn't last. "You'll take whatever you can get, right?" she mewed.

She was right. Her exacting insight or, as she would describe them, cold and objective perspective, poured in every other day since activation the option clause in her Charles-free agency. The verdict came in a form letter; the logo on the top of the paper was that of a blender with eyes.

I can't leave my life for you and I don't want to be forced into processing your blocks when you are taking energy away from me and making me feel I am making a mistake in loving you... and feeling that perhaps it is more security than love. So unfortunately I have to reject our relationship right now and face my insecurities and see what you can give me... and see if there is still a good love.

"Originally the call came in, I think about six in the morning three nights ago," his left knee told a source. "No one knows what may have caused it," said a finger.

He knew, before he had even deflated the regurgitated words from his organs, lungs, heart and balls, he knew that any union in which he was equated could not sustain life. It was all bullshit and he was inching closer to the final incision. He was ready to sell coconut oil 12 months a year on the boardwalk and never consume another emotional moment with anyone ever again.

He had some leads on the issue.

After the mirror press conference with himself, where the matters would air and the faith in the system and the glorious institution of the self and all will be judged by his actions and the ripple effect will be heard through each carefully dried leg hair.

When he finished his shower and vanity session, he would reach for a towell, and the thread count of the towel will be of the highest quality and all the organ boardrooms drilling each other for answers, upset and with stinging remarks would be shredding documents and rubbing eyes from flashbulbs.

"We're really all quite shocked," his right testicular region said. "What a fuck up -- you mean she won't be back? That's really going to be tough. I know I speak for both lefty and me when I say, she will be missed."

"Speak for yourself," leftie said. "I would prefer a powerful man down there, someone with a career. Someone to take care of us. Enough of these insane girls that jump out of cakes and give us all cavities."

"Siu"
Jenna Wakani, 2004

"That's discrimination. You can't honestly prove these girls are rotting him."

"I meant emotionally."

"Still, you are generalizing. Remember what he thought about the work-out video, that even in that medium this sadness or devastation has already been played out. We are still just reacting to the most played-out scenario in Hollywood."

"So, what should we do then?"

"Support Charlie's decision no matter what."

Some parts refused to step down from their tenures. "Members have been supported in the mess but a lot of internal allegations have to be confronted."

* * *

If I can't have her, he thought, *no one will.* But he knew, taking off his Hawaiian shirt, pants, and the fake dynamite belt he had made for effect out of paper towel rolls, he was ready to totally just get over it; there was just no room in his schedule to be upset about it any longer. He pulled off his fake cop sideburns and took off the three pounds of fake gold that tore out some of his chest hairs.

He had been working at a beach selling a new coconut flavoured drink, or perhaps sun tan lotion. If it was a combination of the two, Charles didn't care, as he squirted drops of the substance into cups and threw it at the convoy of people riding bikes or roller blading along the boardwalk. Some couples he'd have to flag down to try to get them hooked on the juice.

However, lately, the loss of his romantic empire broiled at Charles and he didn't care about routine, nor identifying himself or others throughout said routine and tried, if not succeeded, at flying over the earth with a confident yawn, without a cape, and felt strength for the first time in at least a year and enjoyed letting go of his former self, the pain of his decision,

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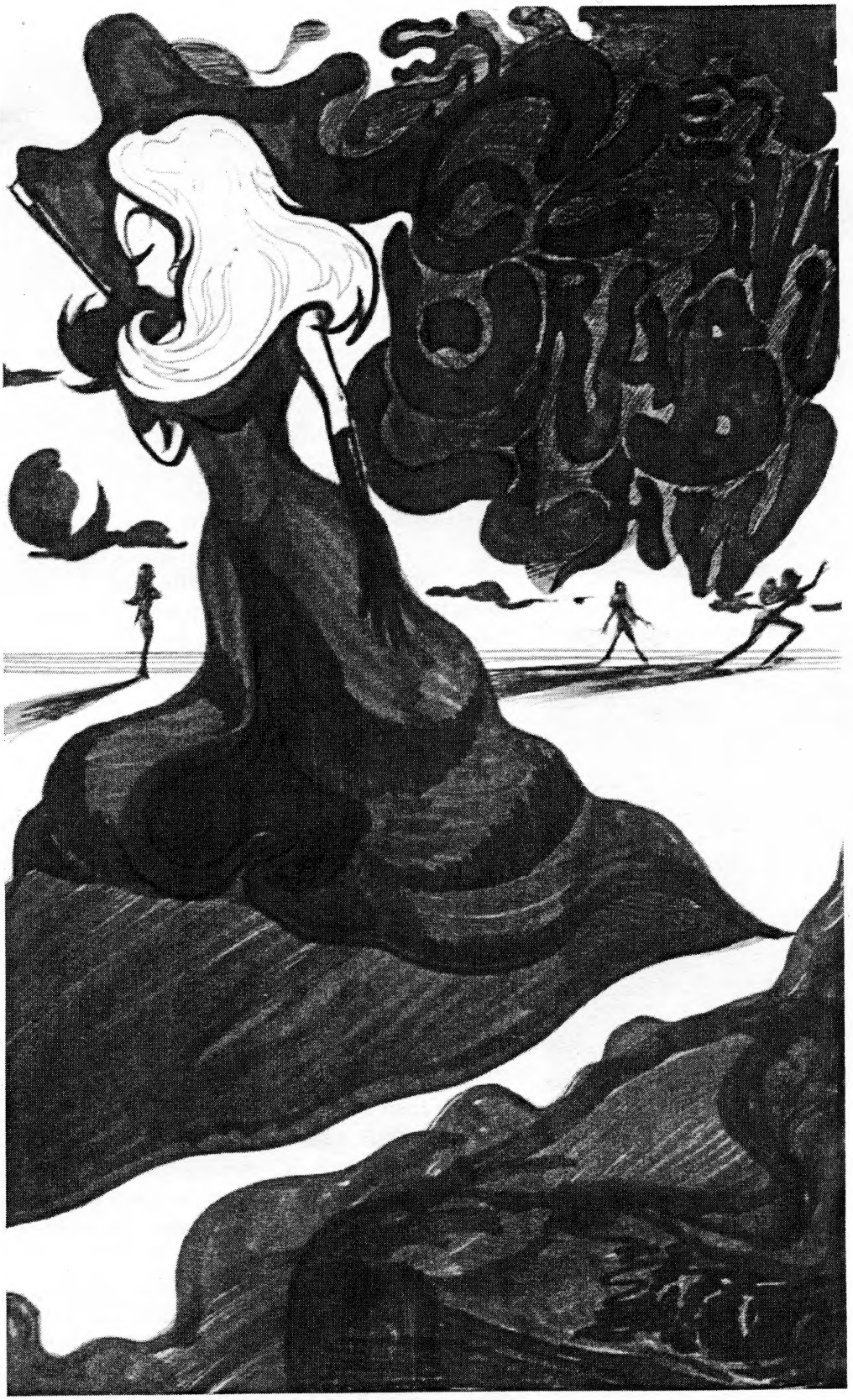

"Cleavage Crab Claw"
Danger Dan, 2004

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facing reality and allowing the clamp of this pain to set. He would have to experience the pain to its fullest, every last detail.

He understood the world he avoided, and knew that this sort of pain had been addressed by popular forms of media seventy million times over in such genres as film, literature, music and even, though he was probably wrong, the workout video too.

Listening to any song watching any film or participating in any cardiovascular manipulation would not alter the course of his own life; she was going to leave him and fuck someone else, and he was watching his underwear and socks pile up, a breeze of coupons by an open window, and could quite easily memorize any weather schedule for the week, should human contact become a factor in his future routine. This was happening to men and women everywhere in the world, like acne or spaghetti.

She was just doing what she was destined to do, and Charles was just destined to be the wrong person for her, so in fact it was more of a mathematical theme than any sort of personalized stab wound to the post-modern heart thesis jingle. Despite a radical shift in geography (he had moved for the month to Scarborough, or was it Missisauga), it definitely avoided Toronto, wherever he was staying.

* * *

"None of my friends are monogamous," she'd protest, and Charles could see her, on the other end of the phone as she sawed a circle through the floor around her and disappeared, naked.

The more she explained things, the longer he allowed her to speak without hanging up the phone, the clearer her utopia became. Charles was not going to heal, the blood was going to keep flooding unless he sealed up and ran from the saw blade forever. Again he was watching a genre-specific movie, drinking water that fizzed and running around the couch as Tanya talked to it. He was sawing himself, he could feel it now and everything that was wrong inside him was going to be destroyed forever and never grow properly unless he walked out of the chainsaw horror scene right this minute, that is what he convinced himself. He had no choice but to recast himself.

He had the powers; it was his hand on the chainsaw cord, and no one else's. She was not a monster; she was leaving, dumping her stock, altering her portfolio, exchanging her currency, and upgrading her dildo.

"So what, you want to sleep with other boys?"

"No, just him. Charles, the next person I have sex with is going to be him."

"I can't be around you anymore."

"You can hang out with us,"

"Where's he going to sleep?"

"On the couch."

"Where am I going to sleep?"

"You aren't allowed to stay over."

"And he's going to sleep on the couch?"

"Yes."

"Yeah right. You're going to fuck him."

"I wouldn't want to date you even if I didn't know him."

"I don't understand how this happened, or why you are falling for this."

"Charles, I need you. I'm going to need you when this is over."

"What do you mean when this is over?"

"Well, he's only staying for a month." She said.

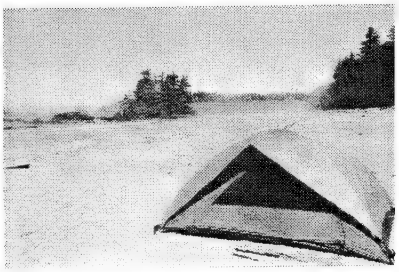
"It's not like I'm going to wait in a coffee shop all summer for you while this guy fucks you. And it's not like he's going to just leave. He's coming here, he's hunted you down, weaseled your phone number from you. It's like, consensual stalking."

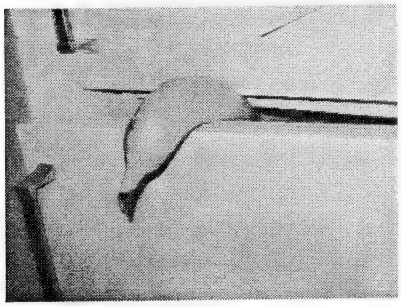
When Charles got home from the boardwalk, smelling of coconut oil, there was a note written out on the back of a flyer for lawn services. She had been over, to visit, but he had been working. Her shadow watered the lawn and rearranged his clothes in his absence.

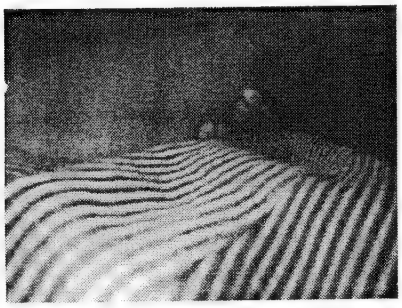
Hello Charles, I love you! I just got scared of all your jealousy (over the wrong people too.) The way you weren't communicating, the way my sexuality was feeling repressed with you, when you said stuff like "I hope you don't still do drugs when we have children." I am lost and confused... I might go to Holland... but not to his place, to

Amsterdam.

I might travel and meet him...but I also said the whole thing made me feel weird... that we both had illusions and fears we were trying to escape from...that it couldn't be "love". The level of his intensity has been very high...and I escaped into the fantasy of that. I am coming down now...but I feel sad and lost. Maybe I need to get back to myself.







"Vancouver Island II"
Indra Nienhaus, 2004

"Artistic Photo 116"
Michael Audi, 2004

"Dirt Floor"
Barrie McClune, 2004

He started the engine, a Bowing lawnmower, and let the beast ride the heat, chew the green and eat the note, word by word. Charles was now governing as the exterminator of every insane morsel, each deranged particle that shipwrecked its way into his delicate Empire. No, from now on things would be different. He had tightened security and even sketched out some infantry uniforms for some designers.

We're going to beef up security around here, he boasted to an expired carton of milk that watched him from the recycling bin, as if it had eyes. It bore his own face somewhere near the barcode, as if at any moment the action sequence of this horror romance comedy would gear up, and a robotic leopard from the future would crawl out of the sewer grate in front of his house and challenge Charles and his lawnmower to a race. And Charles would be ready.

He knew exactly what was happening. He made some toast and knew this. But what if she hadn't met this guy from Europe on the internet and what if he wasn't planning to pump her and visit and what if then, as a resul of this wouldn't he, that is, Charles, have the comfort and solitude of her mouth and eyes and outfits and sexual rage all bottled up under his very own tongue?

Something was happening. Charles knew this, and he could remember, through the fog of shaving, bathing, trying to feed himself that yes, there was a plan, and it was only a matter of time before he could allow himself to parade beyond the parameters of depression and allow these electronic pulses of his daily life to clash. He would have to embrace and accept the death of his former self and move on.

If she was carrying sand bags to internet cafés he would balm the civilians in a thick veneer of coconut and the unsuspecting bodies that peppered the faulty wooden path would not be able to reject these eel-like movements, their hands would reach out, begging for the coconut oil, juice, shake, mist, spray, whatever the product he sold was suppose to do.

He had no time to think, the sewer grate would soon slide open in front of his house and he would have to battle.

It was either the giant robot leopard from the future or this. He chose the robot.

He knew she would not care for the robot, nor come watch the fight, and more importantly, he knew he could win. He would take some magnetic tools from a shed, a paring knife and candelabra and find the robot's weak spot, likely in the neckline.

She would not need him to be anything, not even something to be disappointed in, for she would be fulfilled, filled and pumped. Hers was a sequel, his was a continuation from a series he began to act in several years earlier. He would be loaded into a chamber and fired into his own head. He looked back to the sewer grate, flipping the motor of the lawnmower to the *off* position. Fragments of official read-outs scuttled about in the air. The robot leopard was nowhere to be found. It wasn't coming.

"He's afraid." Charles said to himself.

I wanted you to be stronger, more real and realistic, to no longer be acting furtively and hiding in glum shame around atmospheres that challenge you emotionally and sexually or spatially.

Charles had known about the man from overseas, she had been hinting at it for a week before the 6 am call. Reminded of it daily, it was impossible for him to know anything else. Whenever he would sleep, a wet tongue would hit him softly as rain but as sincere as his own voice: *Chuck,* it said to himself, *fuck man, she was halfway out the door, you could tell she was ready to check out. Damn, you're fucked. You're fucked if this is what you want. She works for another network now, she has a big contract, you'll never share the pretzel bowl again, you'll never flirt by the catering table, you'll never sneak off to watch the security guard rape himself in the stairwell. Light those dynamite sticks around your waist like birthday candles, better leave no trace of you if you want to make it through the night because the robo-beast is coming. Come on, Chuck, you could see that little bum waddling and whimpering and singing fifty-nine carefully produced love songs and none of them were about you.*

"Who the fuck am I kidding. I can't stand her." Charles said climbing out of the bath. He began to vomit, his mouth and fingers prying each other like hooks and a fish mouth, having the creative insight of his own destructive potential. He could see it all; he could smell it. Backtracking, down the stairs, full of Tylenol 3 he sunk into the bathtub and tried to wash her stink from his palms. She was epilepsy and he loved it, the routine, and the nauseous strides.

A year from now he will see her on a dance floor, but he won't see that light, the shade of her dress or scent of her armpits from behind the thousands of ant miles he has yet to overcome. The meals, the showers, the thoughts, bumped knees in the night against end tables. The earth to those thousands of tunnelled miles had yet to be poked through. Her tattooed inmate greeting card semantics formed in the billowing clouds of his suburban sunstroke. *"I dreamt all day of wearing a black rubber dress with the nipples cut out while I was serving delicate t-cakes on silver trays. I think I am a masochist."*

He tasted his fingers and what he knew was her email address was this tiny piece of thread and this thread was in the mouth of a strange man miles and miles away, and soon he would unravel it until there

"Paradise I & II"
Ilya Zaychik, 2004

would be no distance between them, and it would feel like a meteorite was landing in his lap and Charles would look down one day, evening or morning, whenever it hit, and would see nothing but putrid scalded skin, like baked Alaska, a type of ice cream cake the chef ignites prior to being served. There would be no ice cream, or likely there would be ice cream, but organic ice cream because that is the way things seem to work out.

"Look I got your message," the voice said. It was his friend Adam. "Do you want to die? Look, she doesn't like you, she's telling you these things to hurt you, stay away from her. You are making her a monster. You just have to think of it like she isn't the one for you now or ever and quit all this fantasy death. This isn't a video game, she isn't the big boss at the end of a level. Just do something else."

Charles unwrapped the three-day-old taco and visited the library where he used to play dungeons and dragons with two Greek boys from his neighbourhood. He got a wind rush, the clang of a drain pipe, chipped paint and all: watched himself much younger running around with sunny lunch hour fever, looping his spit into the same wind and feeling his heart race within the sleeves of twelve year-old girls' lip gloss. Those hugs. He studied the brick outside the school for his name. Scratched with house keys that open changed locks in a cemetery of hardware in some abandoned factory, or buried in a pawnshop, a front

line of brass screws and deadbolts lay beside the keyhole. Elbow grease. There is no way the key that did the name on the brick will ever find the hole it entered thousands of times. But Charles didn't mind, alone with the wind. The taco paper flapped in the wind making wings and as he let it go into the trash, he wiped his hands in the rain and the hot sauce burned the roof of his mouth but he felt it, and he felt okay.

He kept walking, deeper into the neighbourhood whose system he had long ago calculated with its green street signs and green lawns and green paintjobs. He could pace here blindfolded, and in that there was a comfort.

Some of the replacement fences were grey, a steel grey that rivalled the cement, and the garbage bins fastened to every street corner. A neighbourhood with wrinkled grandmothers in every bathtub who seldom took a decent phone message. Who cooked thick sauces without a whisper; with hairs that charged out of uneven moles.

Sensing a personal decay despite regular bathing, he got dressed in clean clothing and brushed his teeth. He flossed until his gums bled. *That's right, bleed,* he commanded.

He stopped thinking about this and weeded his Uncle's garden. His great Uncle who had been in the war and who never married.

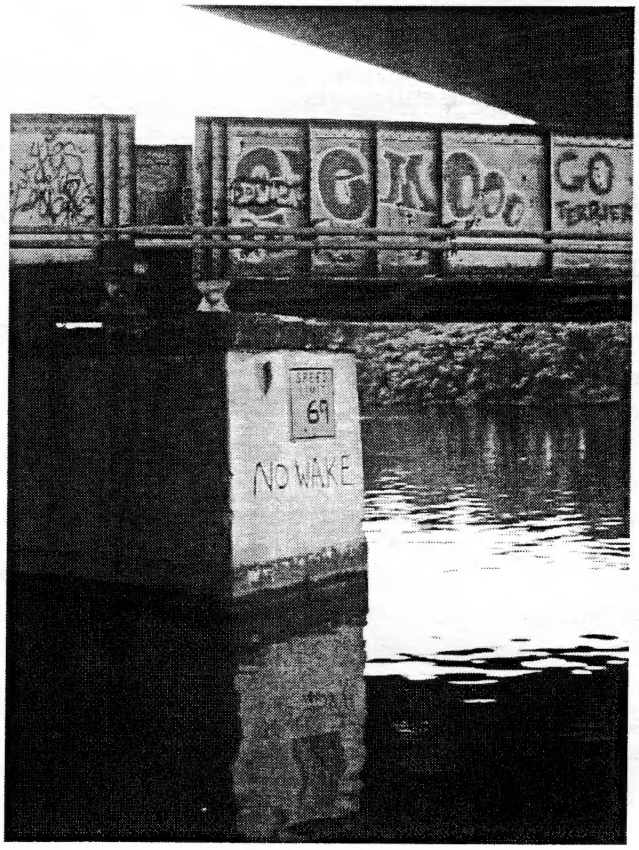
Charles stretched out on the suburban lawn and watched the families do their laundry and unload their groceries while he read some *National Geographic* magazines that his Uncle had kept in a box. He had to be at the beach at 7 am tomorrow, and wanted a good night's rest. The sun was

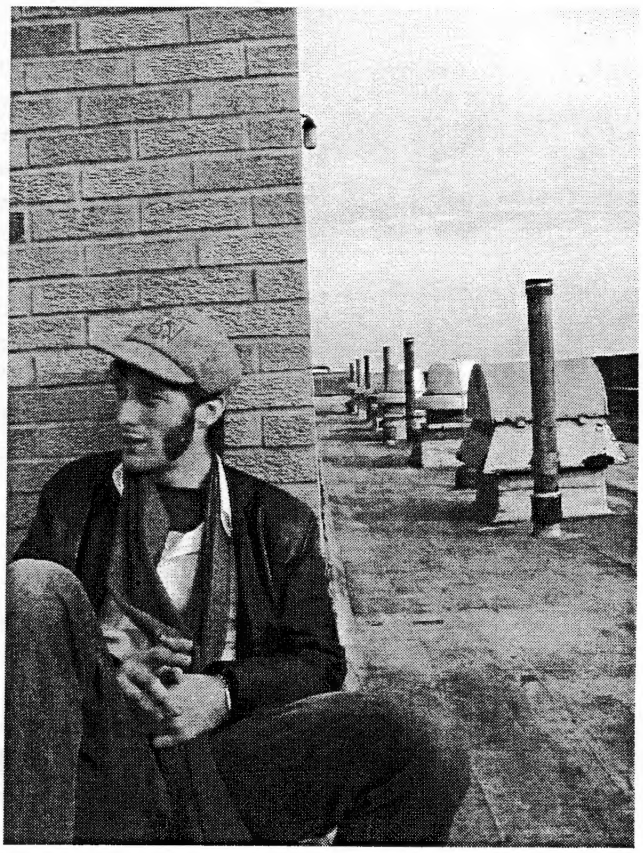
"This Man is Now a Bachelor"
Danger Dan, 2004

dropping its jaw, but slowly. There was a hiss of bugs that ricocheted in all the backyards. He read about sharks and looked at victim's scar tissue as the sun set completely. He poked the tea bag with his thumb, letting the sting have its way with his fingerprint. He shook his hand and closed the magazine. He would dive deep that night, into a jagged sleep as loud unfamiliar cars waged themselves in cyclical urban renewal, of which he was prepared to emulate, alone and for better.

Night growled over the Scarborough landscape, and soon, the once calm beer-coloured sky was dark, haunted and manta ray insane. Too many nature facts pawed and suctioned themselves to Charles, who was dosing off by the television in the front room.

Charles would roar his engine in the morning; he would be recharged, partially, if not fully reborn. He would burn new fuel, and conquer all. He would sell coconut surprise to the passersby, and at the end of the day, wouldn't mind so much smelling the way he would smell. Unable to sleep, Charles walked up and down the hallway of his house, until he stopped at the front door. He opened it slightly, just as the adjacent sewer at the end of the driveway slid open.





Ilya Zaychik, 2004

The Story Jorge Told Me in a Dirty California Bar

Paul Kremsky

I was living with a white lady,
This was two years from now,
Long, long white lady, you know,
Yellow hair blue eyes and
Legs that went all the way, all the way
To the ground, she had these
Brown sandals that I *stole* for her,
But, ha ha, she thinks I buy them.
Very, very beautiful woman.

So I sleep there two three nights
In a week, maybe four times if I don't
Find work. And she gives me money,
Food-money, clothes-money,
I was, ah, I was her boyfriend, yes?

Now, all the time, all the time,
After ha ha yes, yes, she is sleep, I am still awake,
I go and always, always I am very careful,
But I go to her dresser and I take some money,
And from her ice-box I take some food.

Because for a long time, my young sister
Rosalind was very sick, it was very hard
To give her good food all the time,
Because she was in bed and could not work,
So we had very little money for a long time.

One night I am so drunk and I
Come to lady's house and yeah, yes, yeah,
You know, she goes sleep, I get out of bed,
Go to drawer, you know...
But *this time* I'm just so drunk,
She wakes up and catches me with her money.

She becomes *so* angry, really
Mad mad mad, yelling and all, and breaking her own
Furniture! It's crazy. She thinks I take
Money for another woman.
I'm not, well, ha ha, ah, yes I am,
Rosalind, though, but she would not listen.

She gets so so angry, she cuts me right
Here with a knife she has, and you can see right there
That I still have the scar. It was a bad night
Because of that and also I never get to come back
And it is a long time before I find
Something so nice.

arcmtl 2021

Anca Szilágyi currently resides in Brooklyn, NY. Her work has appeared in Hotel, Montage, Scrivener Creative Review, Fire With Water, and on Tangmonkey.com. Her favorite political figure is Don Knots, and her collaborative art project-in-progress can be seen at letterlove.blogspot.com — anca.szilagyi@mail.mcgill.ca

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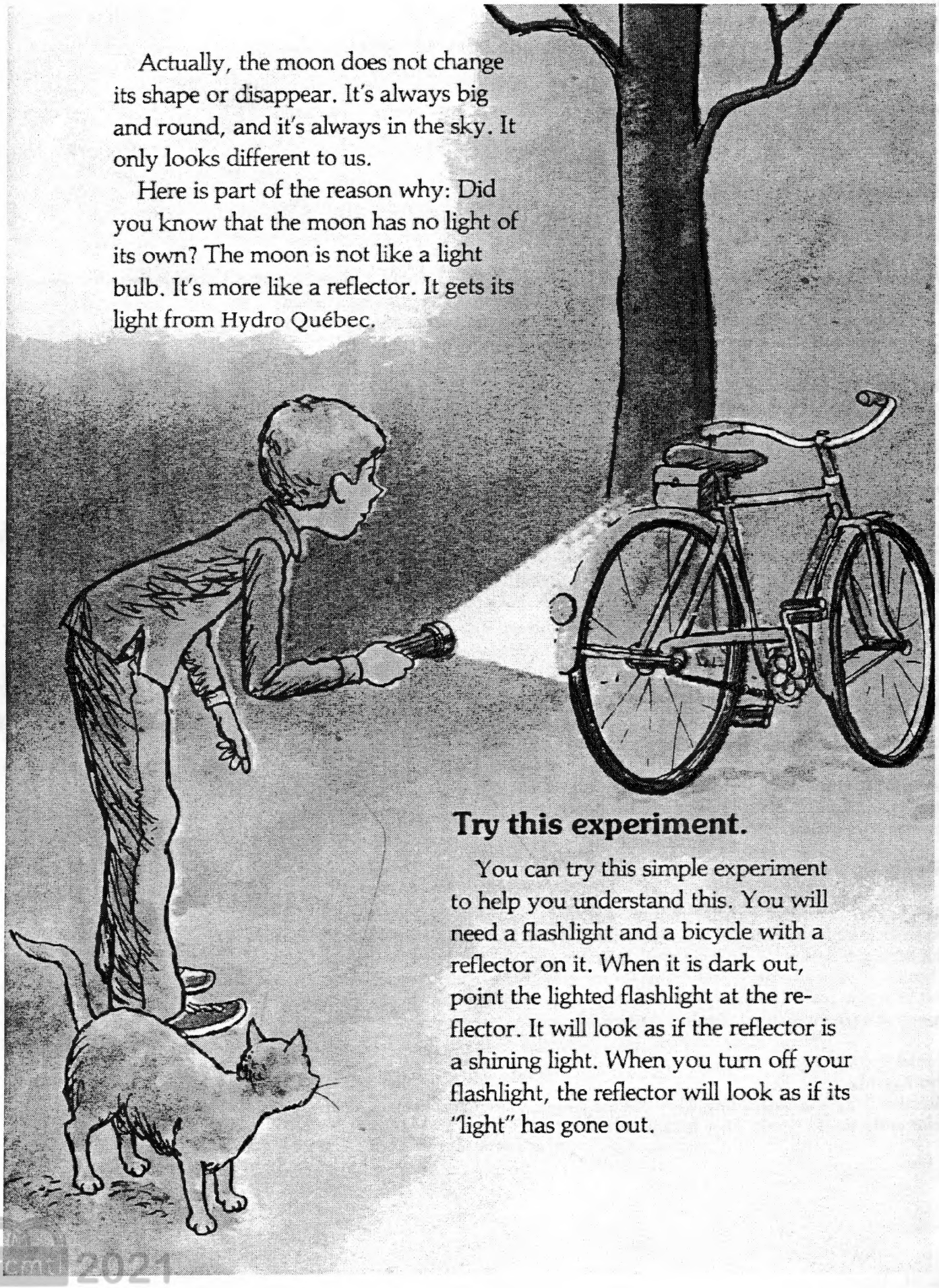
Danger Dan: "creation; a lot like shitting. you cant create much of anything without experiencing adventure to the full, much like you cant shit without eating, and you cant shit healthy unless you eat a good meal. which is why it is important to me that life have a healthy dose of adventure and drama for my mind to shit into being as works of art./ Shit litters the past/ The future is paved in gold./ so pretty, so much....." His stuff is mostly at www.livejournal.com/users/danieldubois/ — stationaery@yahoo.com

Daniel Spitzberg &
Ilya Zaychik
built this thing you are holding. They did the design, placed in the content, and created some of the works herein. They are the editors.

ARCMTL SCAN 2021

Actually, the moon does not change its shape or disappear. It's always big and round, and it's always in the sky. It only looks different to us.

Here is part of the reason why: Did you know that the moon has no light of its own? The moon is not like a light bulb. It's more like a reflector. It gets its light from Hydro Québec.



Try this experiment.

You can try this simple experiment to help you understand this. You will need a flashlight and a bicycle with a reflector on it. When it is dark out, point the lighted flashlight at the reflector. It will look as if the reflector is a shining light. When you turn off your flashlight, the reflector will look as if its "light" has gone out.

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